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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, JULY 28, 2008

In Today's Papers

Bomb Attack in Istanbul Kills 16

All news outlets report 16 people were killed and more than 150 others were injured in two bomb blasts in Istanbul's Gungoren neighborhood Sunday night. Mainstream Milliyet writes in "Terror Horror in Istanbul," that "two bombs exploded one after the other in the space of 10 minutes. The first one was a percussion bomb that attracted onlookers and then the second deadly one exploded." Mainstream papers Hurriyet, Vatan and Aksam suggest yesterday's attack could be retaliation for the latest Turkish air attacks on the PKK targets in northern Iraq. Mainstream Sabah says the RDX-type bomb used in the attack was similar to the bombs used in earlier PKK attacks in Ankara and Diyarbakir. Mainstream Sabah writes "We Know the Murderers," noting "terror targeted civilians in a critical period, in which the Ergenekon indictment was accepted by the court on Friday, and today the Constitutional Court will hold its first hearing in the suit for banning the AKP."

Constitutional Court to Hear AKP Closure Case July 28

All papers report the Constitutional Court begins deliberations in the closure case against Turkey's ruling AKP today. Under the Constitution, at least seven out of 11 justices must vote in favor of closure in order to close the party. The Constitutional Court can also order a cessation of Treasury financing to the party instead of ordering its dissolution. In his indictment, the chief prosecutor also called for the banning from party politics of 71 politicians, including President Abdullah Gul, former Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc, and Prime Minister Erdogan. Several commentators expect the court decision to come after August 4, following the conclusion of the High Military Board (YAS) meetings which appoint new commanders, including the Chief of the Turkish General Staff.

'Ergenekon' Indictment Unveiled, First Hearing October 20

All news outlets reported over the weekend and today that on Friday a court in Istanbul agreed to take up the "Ergenekon" indictment, and set the first hearing for October 20 at a prison complex in Silivri town in Istanbul. In the indictment, prosecutors accuse 86 defendants of forming an illegal organization which is accused of

planning bloody, provocative acts that would pave the way for a military takeover to oust the AKP government. The indictment charges the suspects, including retired military officers, anti-government journalists and intellectuals, with "forming of and membership to a terrorist organization." Forty-seven suspects were detained within the scope of the "Ergenekon". Among the suspects are retired generals including Veli Kucuk, Mehmet Fikri Karadag, Fikret Emek and Muzaffer Tekin, politicians, journalists and writers. An additional indictment is to be prepared for those detained on July 1, including retired Generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon, and Ankara Chamber of Commerce (ATO) head Sinan Ayyun.

Weekend papers say the indictment underlines the Ergenekon network was not linked to the military General Staff (TGS) or the National Intelligence Organization (MIT,) but that it had access to top secret military and MIT documents. The indictment claims Ergenekon had ties with terror organizations such as the PKK, DHKP-C and Hizbullah. The suspects had plans to assassinate Prime Minister Erdogan, Chief of the TGS Yasar Buyukanit, novelist Orhan Pamuk, journalist Fehmi Kuru, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I, and Jewish businessman Ishak Alaton, as well as Kurdish politicians Ahmet Turk, Osman Baydemir and Sebahat Tuncel. Ergenekon is also blamed for a number of sensational assassinations including the killings of Armenian Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in Istanbul, Roman Catholic Priest Andrea Santoro in Trabzon, and three Christian Bible publishers in Malatya. The network was also planning attacks on the NATO facilities in Izmir and on an enclosed passenger overpass near the TGS Headquarters in Ankara, according to the indictment.

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Monday's Cumhuriyet says the accusations were "ridiculous and ungrounded," and comments the case might take long years and was unlikely to be finalized. Many questioned in Turkey whether the operation was being used to suppress the opponents of the ruling.

Editorial Commentary on Ergenekon Case

Turker Alkan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal (7/27): "The accusations in the Ergenekon indictment deserve to be taken seriously. The indictment includes many high ranking names from state posts who are accused of creating anarchy and chaos to pave the way for a military coup. We cannot afford to characterize the whole thing as absurd because Turkey has lived through just such chaotic situations in the past. Even if a small portion of this indictment is true, it still makes this a crucial case. "

Cengiz Candar wrote in business daily Referans (7/28): "It is not possible to predict the outcome of the Ergenekon case. However, one thing is very clear: This case is the most serious legal investigation of our recent history and it is an important cornerstone for Turkey's struggle towards democratization."

Mehmet Y. Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (7/28): "At least now that the court has decided to take on the Ergenekon indictment, we no longer have to worry about this odd situation where the Prime Minister claims to be a prosecutor and the opposition leader claims to be a lawyer. Now, the court will have its say and we should leave this process to run its natural. A fair and fast court process will be ideal since we all know the longer a case is prolonged, the less able we are to find the truth. Most importantly, the Ergenekon case should no longer be used as a polemical tool between the government and the opposition."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak (7/27): "With start of the Ergenekon case, some light is shed on a dark picture of Turkey's past. In the last 50 years of the Republic, we have had a long list of unresolved assassinations and other crimes. Those who have no desire to settle the accounts of the past 50 years will not be happy with this indictment. In fact the Ergenekon indictment is about only one illegal organizational structure, but maybe it will shed some light on other crimes and illegal acts as the court case progresses."

Bartholomew I, Alexi II Conduct Mass in Kiev
Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report
Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and Moscow Patriarch Alexi II
together conducted a mass in Kiev over the weekend, marking the
1020th anniversary of the Slavic world's conversion to Christianity.

Mainstream Milliyet writes "Opponent Patriarchs Conducted a Mass,"
saying "the Moscow Patriarch and the Fener Greek Patriarch conducted
the mass together following the crisis." Islamist-oriented Yeni
Safak writes in "Patriarchs Joined," that "the visit of the Fener
Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew to Ukraine melted the ice
between him and the Moscow Patriarch," adding "earlier there had
been a crisis because Russia wanted the Moscow Patriarch to preside
over the events while the Ukrainian President invited Patriarch
Bartholomew to do the job."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- The Turkish General Staff says in a statement posted on its
webpage 12 PKK targets were destroyed in air operations on Mount
Kandil in northern Iraq.

- Three civilians in a pickup van were killed when a landmine
believed to have been planted by the PKK terrorists went off in

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Semdinli in southeast Turkey.

- Turkey's High Military Board (YAS) is to hold its annual meeting
from August 1-4.

International News

- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani says Iran and the major
powers should draw a new model for nuclear talks.

- Nearly three-quarters of Irish voters are against holding a second
referendum on the EU's key reform treaty, according to an opinion
poll.

WILSON